

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND BE

SUBJECT: US IMPORTS OF BELGIAN COBALT POWDER

1. FEDERAL PREPAREDNESS AGENCY CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING INTERNATIONAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT US DOMESTIC PRODUCTION CAPABILITY FOR ULTRAFINE COBALT POWDER, WHICH ESSENTIAL FOR MACHINE TOOL MANUFACTURE. ACCORDING FPA, APPROXIMATELY 95 PERCENT OF US NEEDS NOW SUPPLIED BY BELGIAN COMPANIES SOCIETE GENERAL DE MINERAIS (SGM) AND METALLURGIE HOBOKEN, WHICH MAY BE SUBSIDIARY OF SGM, AT ANNUAL COST OF 12 TO 15 MILLION DOLLARS.

2. FPA ALSO INTERESTED IN ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR DECREASING US DEPENDENCE, SUCH AS ESTABLISHING POWDER STOCKPILE OR PERSUADING BELGIAN PROCESSORS TO ESTABLISH SUBSIDIARIES IN US.

3. POST REQUESTED DETERMINE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF US PURCHASES TO BELGIAN ULTRAFINE COBALT POWDER INDUSTRY AND LIKELY REPERCUSSIONS, IF ANY, OF FUTURE BUYING HALT. ALSO HELPFUL WOULD BE ESTIMATE OF POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON INDUSTRY'S

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ORGANIZATION OR ON INTERNATIONAL POWDER MARKET WHICH MIGHT

RESULT FROM FUTURE STOCKPILE ORDERS, WHICH WOULD EXTEND OVER
UNKNOWN PERIOD OF TIME AND PROBABLY TOTAL ABOUT 4 1/2
MILLION POUNDS OF POWDER WITH CURRENT VALUE OF 40 TO 50
MILLION DOLLARS.

4. ONE US COMPANY (HALL CHEMICAL OF OHIO) REPORTED TO HAVE
HELD TALKS WITH METALLURGIE HOBOKEN ON POSSIBILITY OF USING
BELGIAN PROCESSES IN US. HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE INDICATES
BELGIAN COMPANIES AWARE THAT USG ALSO CONSIDERING PROBLEM.
ROBINSON

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